

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/018,125
Reply to Office Action dated November 1, 2005

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is in reply to the Office Action dated November 1, 2005. A three (3) month extension of time and a Request For Continued Examination are enclosed herewith. Therefore, the time period for reply extends up to and includes May 1, 2006.

In the subject Action, claims 9, 10, 12, and 22-25 were rejected and claims 13, 14, and 26 were objected to. Claims 1-3, 5-8, 15, and 18 are allowed. Claims 1-3, 5-10, 12-15, 18, and 22-26 remain pending in the present application. In light of the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the pending rejections and advancement of this application to allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 9, 10, 12, and 22-25 were rejected under §102(b) as being anticipated by Neal (U.S. Patent No. 3,650,114). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 9 recites in part a restraint device comprising a pair of restraint faces laterally spaced apart to receive a length of an elongate structure therebetween. Each restraint face is configured to operate along and control curvature of the length of the elongate structure during lateral deflection of the section. Each restraint face provides for lateral movement of the length of the elongate structure within the restraint.

In contrast, Neal fails to disclose or suggest that each restraint face is configured to operate along and control curvature of the length of the elongate structure during lateral deflection of the section. Rather, Neal discloses that an end of derrick 23 carries an elongated flexible shoe 25 having a flowline 26 passing therethrough. See, e.g., col. 2, ll. 43-45; Figs. 1 and 3. Neal also discloses that a plurality of flexible shoes 39 are pivotally attached to bar 21 by

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means of a plurality of rods 40. See, e.g., col. 2, ll. 74-75; Figs. 1-3. However, there is no disclosure of the specific construction of the elongated flexible shoe 25 and the flexible shoes 39 in Neal. In other words, Neal fails to disclose or suggest that each restraint face is configured to operate along and control curvature of the length of the elongate structure during lateral deflection of the section as recited in Applicants' claim 9.

Neal also fails to disclose or suggest that each restraint face provides for lateral movement of the length of the elongate structure within the restraint. Rather, Neal discloses that the portion of flowline 26 adjacent the installation 10 has slidably connected thereto shoes 25 and 39 in which flowline 26 can slide. See, e.g., col. 3, ll. 16-18; Fig. 3. In other words, Neal teaches away from claim 9 of the present invention, which recites that each restraint face provides for lateral movement of the length of the elongate structure within the restraint.

It is thus submitted, for at least the reasons noted, that claim 9 is patentable. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Claims 10 and 12 depend from claim 9 and so are also believed to be allowable over the art of record. Applicants do not otherwise concede the correctness of the rejection and reserve the right to make additional arguments as may be necessary. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Claim 22 recites in part a stabilization system for a section of a submarine elongate structure, the stabilization system including a restraint for limiting the lateral movement of the elongate structure. The restraint includes two restraint means laterally spaced apart so as to be arranged to allow the pipeline to extend therebetween. Each of the restraint means is configured to allow lateral movement of the elongate structure proximate the restraint means, during which

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lateral movement the restraint means controls curvature of the elongate structure by impressing a characteristic curvature of the restraint means therealong.

In contrast, Neal fails to disclose or suggest two restraint means laterally spaced apart so as to be arranged to allow the pipeline to extend therebetween. Rather, Neal has flexible shoes 39 spaced at intervals along the length of the flowline. See, e.g., Figs. 1 and 3. Further, as also noted above with regard to claim 9, there is no teaching in Neal that the flexible shoes are configured to allow lateral movement of the elongate structure proximate the restraint means.

It is thus submitted, for at least the reasons noted, that claim 22 is patentable. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Claims 23-25 depend from claim 22 and so are also believed to be allowable over the art of record. Applicants do not otherwise concede the correctness of the rejection and reserve the right to make additional arguments as may be necessary. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-3, 5-8, 15, and 18 recite allowable subject matter.

Claims 13, 14, and 26 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The rejections under §102 have been overcome because of at least the reasons stated above. Moreover, claims 13, 14, and 26 depend (directly or indirectly) from independent claim 9 or claim 22. Accordingly, the dependent claims include all of the elements of the independent claim from which it depends, and so are patentable for at least the reasons stated above.

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Conclusion

This response is believed to be responsive to all points raised in the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all of the currently pending claims. Should the Examiner have any remaining questions or concerns, then the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned attorney at 612.336.4755 to discuss the same.

Respectfully submitted,



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